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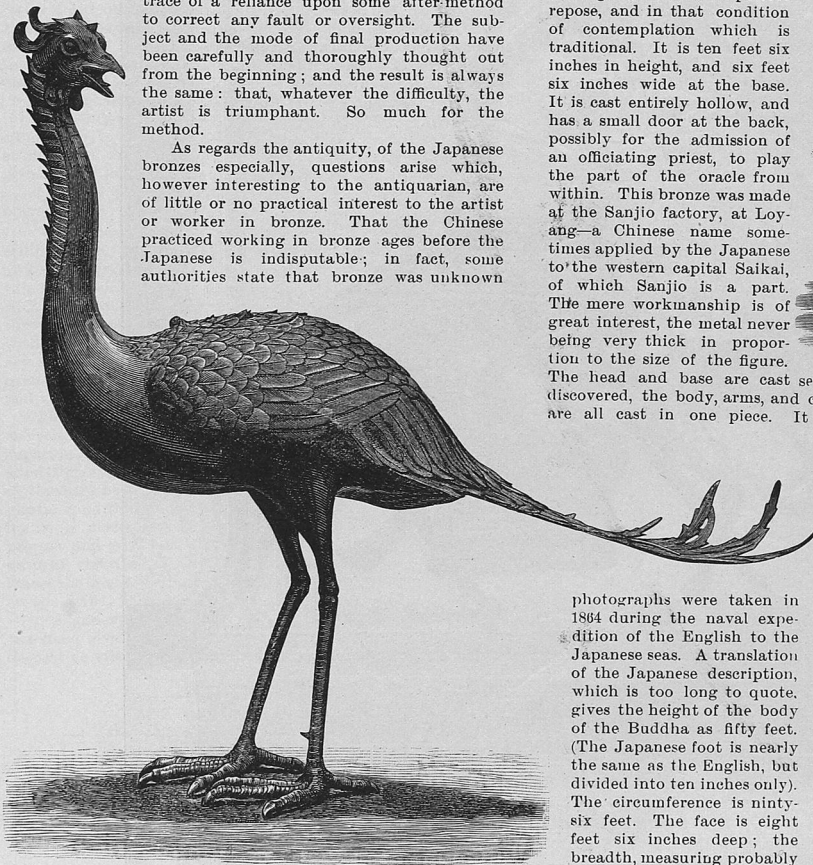
THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

JAPANESE AND CHINESE BRONZES.

BY GEORGE WALLIS.

PROBABLY the most enduring specimens of Oriental design, and certainly the most authentic in respect of antiquity, the art-bronzes of China and Japan present many interesting patterns which to the student of Oriental art in relation to analogous arts of the West, cannot fail to prove suggestive: not only as regards the character of the metal or alloy, but also in relation to *technique*, and the skill, ingenuity, and art-power of their producers. It is not too much to say that in this perfection of adaption of means to a given end, there are no examples of art in metal that approaches the Japanese in the final result. The artist-modeller of the design to be cast in bronze appears to have foreseen every point of difficulty—sometimes indeed to have created difficulties for himself, in order to have at once the satisfaction and the credit of having overcome them. There is never anywhere the faintest trace of a reliance upon some after-method to correct any fault or oversight. The subject and the mode of final production have been carefully and thoroughly thought out from the beginning; and the result is always the same: that, whatever the difficulty, the artist is triumphant. So much for the method.

As regards the antiquity, of the Japanese bronzes especially, questions arise which, however interesting to the antiquarian, are of little or no practical interest to the artist or worker in bronze. That the Chinese practiced working in bronze ages before the Japanese is indisputable; in fact, some authorities state that bronze was unknown



in Japan before the eighth century of the Christian era. It is certain, too, that the Chinese—some of whose bronzes date back, according to good authorities, to 700 and even 1000 B. C.—had to gradually develop the art from very primitive methods, and that the larger works had to be hammered together rather than cast in one piece, or, if in several pieces, fired together. The Japanese had none of those early difficulties to contend with. Chinese methods were carried to Japan by Chinese artists, or possibly by Japanese who, having gone to China and practiced working in bronze by the Chinese methods, carried their experience back to their own country. In Japan, therefore, the art began almost at the point of practice and *technique* to which the Chinese had brought it, after centuries of work.

The extent to which the Japanese carried the art of working in bronze is not one of the least remarkable features of an industry whose products appear to have spread to every nook and corner of the island. The temples, of course, absorbed great quantities of statues, incense-burners, vases, and other vessels used in the ceremonials of Buddhism. Bells, too—of enormous size, and almost without number—were to be found in

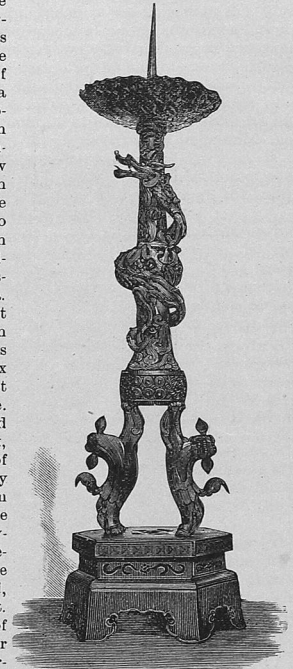
some of the larger temples. Examples of some of these bells are in the South Kensington Museum; they are of great interest by reasons of their inscriptions, of prayers and pious ejaculations which the sounding of the bell on which they were figured would send abroad as the very utterances of the devout. Immense statues of Buddha, or of beings in a state of contemplation approaching to the perfection of Buddha, and the attainment of *nirvana*, are now and then to be found. An example of this kind of bronze work, acquired in 1877, is also in the South Kensington Museum. It represents a Bodhisattva or sacred being destined to become a Buddha. The figure is seated in perfect repose, and in that condition of contemplation which is traditional. It is ten feet six inches in height, and six feet six inches wide at the base. It is cast entirely hollow, and has a small door at the back, possibly for the admission of an officiating priest, to play the part of the oracle from within. This bronze was made at the Sanjio factory, at Loyang—a Chinese name sometimes applied by the Japanese to the western capital Saikai, of which Sanjio is a part. The mere workmanship is of great interest, the metal never being very thick in proportion to the size of the figure.

The head and base are cast separately; but, so far as can be discovered, the body, arms, and crossed legs, swathed in drapery, are all cast in one piece. It bears every mark of being an ancient casting, but it is dateless.

Striking as it is, from its dimensions alone, and the massive treatment of the whole, it is, however, a pigmy in comparison with a bronze figure at Diabrutz (Kausawah Diabrutz); in Japan, of which

photographs were taken in 1864 during the naval expedition of the English to the Japanese seas. A translation of the Japanese description, which is too long to quote, gives the height of the body of the Buddha as fifty feet. (The Japanese foot is nearly the same as the English, but divided into ten inches only). The circumference is ninety-six feet. The face is eight feet six inches deep; the breadth, measuring probably from ear to ear, is eighteen feet. The length of the eyes is four feet, of the eyebrows four feet two inches, of the ears six feet six inches. The nose is three feet eight inches long, its breadth is two feet three inches. The breadth of the mouth is three feet two and a half inches. The thumb of the hand is more than three feet in circumference. The figure, therefore, is at least five times the height of the large bronze in the South Kensington Museum. Judging from the photographs it is a work of equal, and in some respects, I am inclined to think of superior, merit considered from the point of view of art.

Of a different class, but equally interesting in respect of



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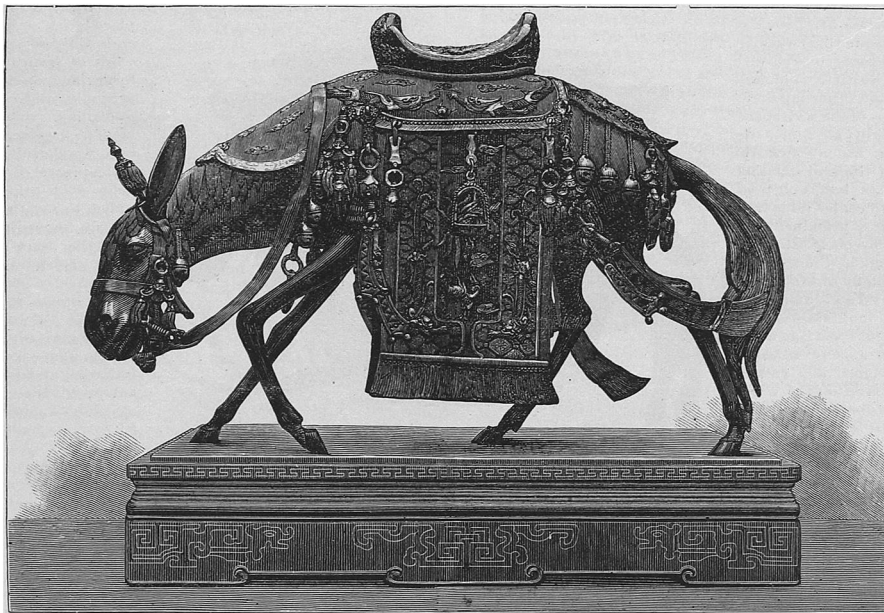
style, is another important bronze in the museum. It is a group of a Japanese warrior on horseback. The quaint but bold and effective treatment of the figure, armed at point with a sandal-stirrup, or foot-rest, to the crest of the steeple-crowned helmet, is vigorously repeated in the dromedary-like horse and the details of the horse trappings, especially in the saddle-cloth with its pictorial bas-reliefs—probably of some incident in the life of Buddha. It suggests a very primitive state of the plastic arts, even after the discovery of bronze in Japan; yet the casting is remarkable for its few blemishes, and the defects found on examination are clearly the result of accident, or defective "firing on," and not of any want of success in the manipulation of the metal as a casting. Dates are so uncertain in connection with bronze objects, unless they bear inscriptions, that it is always difficult to fix a period with certainty; but the group cannot be later than the fourteenth century of our era.

The illustration opposite is from one of the smaller objects in bronze among the countless treasures at South Kensington. It is an incense-burner in the form of a conventional peacock, the mythical Ho-Ho of Japan. The admirable spirit with which the bird is represented shows how well the Japanese understood the characteristics of birds. This power of representation—in drawings, paintings, lacquerwork, and porcelain—has always been recognized; and we find the same skill in adapting the treatment to metal. There is nothing mechanical or merely imitative in the modelling. The artist perfectly well knew that his material would only allow him to suggest the arrangement and texture of the feathers, and he has not carried his imitation

relation to other Japanese bronzes. The seat of the saddle is highly decorated, and forms the lid of the incense burner.

Upon the preceding page we give an example of a totally different style of treatment. It is one of a pair of pricket candlesticks. It is peculiar both in the character of the design and in *technique*. The skill shown in the modelling and the chiselling is remarkable, as the object may be said to be of perforated work throughout. The stem of the candlestick is cast hollow, the perforations giving the outlines of the decorative details. It supports a sconce or circular dish, with a pricket in the centre. A dragon is entwined around the stem; it is treated with great spirit and a suggestive elasticity and prehensile force, as it clings, so to speak, to the hollow column. This central column is supported by two conventional lions, or more probably by two dogs of the Fo type, standing on their hind feet upon a base of exceedingly elegant form, admirably wrought as regards the surface and details.

The candlestick below it is of totally different type. It consists of a bronze base of even more elegant design than the first, and ornamented and finished with equal skill. On this is seated a remarkably spirited example of Japanese modelling, casting and chasing, no other than the sacred dog Fo; and from it springs a stem of poppy-like flower treated in the naturalistic manner which the Japanese sometimes adopt, it may be, rather with a view to showing their skill in adaption, than from any conviction of the appropriate uses of the method. The stem of the flower terminates in a poppy like corolla, with a pricket in the center.



JAPANESE BRONZE INCENSE-BURNER.

beyond the requisite point; yet the details, as well as the general aspect, are all perfect. The head of the bird is full of true expression. The *technique* of the casting is such as would certainly puzzle a very able moulder of metal to imitate, especially in the treatment of the tail-feathers. In the center of the back of the bird is a perforated lid to admit of placing the incense inside.

Another incense-burner, figured in our picture on this page, is a remarkable contrast, in treatment and general effect. It is in the form of a mule, saddled, bridled, and draped with rich housings. The animal is represented with cloven hoofs, and the bronze rests on a wooden base inlaid with a meander pattern in silver. The variegated effects of the trappings—produced by painting in colors and gold—give this work a singular Spanish look, and suggests the effects produced by Spanish artists in their painted and gilt wood-carvings. The minuteness with which the details of the housings are carried out is so thoroughly Japanese, that supposing the artist to have imitated an example of Spanish wood-carving, he certainly has carried his work very far beyond the original. It would, indeed, be difficult to carry it further. I should add that the bronze is so exceptional in its treatment as to stand well-nigh alone in

The naturalism of the Japanese, and to a certain extent of the Chinese, has had a most misleading effect on the bronze-workers of Europe. The few specimens which found their way to the West during the early part and the middle of the last century, were just sufficient to excite the not very commendable ambition of the French and subsequently of the English workers in brass and in bronze. From an extravagant reproduction of plant forms, and other attempts at realism, European design in cast metal declined to a mere mechanical imitation of natural forms in a material utterly unsuitable to their artistic representations. I need not further remark on the worthlessness of the result.

The Chinese vase, which we engrave on the following page, has been selected for its character in design, and its perfect adaption to the material in which it is produced and to the method of production. It is an incense-burner or vase of copper, having squared handles and three short feet. The stand is composed of an admirably conventionalized leaf arrangement. It has a solid and massive appearance, suggestive of size and grandeur, but it is only five and a half inches high, by a little over six inches in diameter. The incised or engraved decoration on the body of the vessel is peculiarly Chinese, and the vessel forms a contrast to Japanese examples.

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I should add that my illustrations and descriptions are typical of only a few of the many specimens of Japanese bronzes to be found in the South Kensington Museum, whilst the Chinese examples have been alluded to in order to show the true origin of Japanese work in bronze, and by way of contrast on certain generic points.

THE MARQUAND HOUSE.

THE Marquand house is situated in Madison avenue, and as the name implies is the residence of Mr. H. G. Marquand.

Externally the house may be described as French Renaissance in character, though in detail this style is not adhered to. It is quiet and unpretentious in general effect, the lower part being of warm colored sandstone, while the upper portion is built of red brick with stone dressings, and the roof covered with green slate. The main entrance is at the side with outside steps leading to open porch, the ceiling of which is formed of richly colored old tiles from Spain set in panels. The door opens into an ante-hall, which has a high dado of dark color, with a deep frieze of gold, forming the background for figure decoration; it contains upholstered seats, and from it are two wide doorways, one leading to the guest stairs the other to the hall. These guest stairs give access to retiring rooms, which are in close proximity to the first gallery of the hall and the main staircase. The larger hall, which may be called Renaissance in design, is the full height of house, and lighted from roof, with staircase of light oak, having richly carved notch board, and at each floor level a gallery with open balustrade. On the walls of part of the lower portion are panels of fine old Moresque tiles, with the intervening spaces covered with old Spanish leather. Valuable old English and other tapestries cover portions of the wall space, and on the higher landings large pictures are hung. For the furnishing of the hall old English carved oak has been used, a finely carved center table from Chester being a prominent feature; in the fireplace is a large dog grate, and in the spandrel of the first flight of stairs is a small fernery and miniature waterfall and fountain.

At the right hand side of the hall is the entrance to the salon, which is designed and carried out on the basis of the Greek style. It is an oblong apartment, with the door in the center of the long side; windows at one end and the fireplace at the other. Opposite the entrance is a recess divided from the room by marble pillars, and through glazed openings behind may be seen a small conservatory filled with flowering plants and ferns. Round the room is a low dado of polished warm colored marble formed in panels. The architraves and linings to recesses of windows are of warm, yellow-toned marble, moulded and carved, and round the whole room a sculptured statuary marble frieze extends, which was executed in Rome by eminent Italian sculptors. The walls are hung with silver gray silk, forming the background to many valuable pictures, including works by Rembrandt and other old masters, together with works by Alma Tadema, R. A., including his "Reading of Homer." In the center of the ceiling is a large panel with beautiful figures on a gold ground painted by Sir Frederick Leighton, P. R. A., and his assistant, Mr. James Ward, now Head Master of the Macclesfield School of Art. This formed his most important contribution to the exhibition of the Royal Academy some years ago. Round as it is the centre is paneling of cedar wood, oiled so as to be of dark tone. The open fireplace has a marble mantel the full height of the room, with classic busts in the panels of the upper part, and on the parquet floor are fine skins.

The exquisite furniture for this salon was made in England, being designed by Alma Tadema to harmonize with the general style of the room. It is all very elaborate and distinctively Greek in form, with the framing generally of ebony, beautifully inlaid with carved ivories and mother-o'-pearl and boxwood; the mouldings and carvings are particularly refined and delicate. The long settees and chairs have coverings of silver gray silk, embroidered with patterns which are reproductions of classic examples.

The grand piano is similarly made and inlaid, and the music cabinet is a magnificent piece of furniture. There are two tripod tables with Algerian onyx tops of great beauty.

The conservatory, which leads from the salon, is filled with ferns and flowering plants, arranged on ornamental rock work, over which runs streamlets with miniature pools and waterfalls, all very effectively lighted in the evening by electric lights. The windows are elaborately painted with Renaissance designs so as to obscure the view from the avenue.

A small withdrawing room from the salon is a wondrously beautiful example *a la* Alhambra. The mantel piece is of delicately colored marble, richly carved, and the walls, greatly enriched in low relief, are decorated in cream and gold, with frieze and ceiling of old Moresque tiles of magnificent color set in panels. Some pieces of low toned but gorgeous lusterware pottery aid the chaste and rich effect of the room.

Again entering the hall, a large doorway on the opposite side to the salon entrance to the parlor, which is bewildering in its richness and profusion. Here the style chosen is Japanese of a very pronounced type, and carried out with close attention to detail. It is a perfect marvel of ingenuity and quaint conceits magnificently carried out. Mr. Marquand has for many years been an ardent collector of Japanese curios, old carved ivories, wondrous specimens of lacquer work, embroideries, pottery, etc., and these have been incorporated in the design. The room is oblong with bay window at one end and fireplace in semi-recess at the other.

The walls at the side for about seven feet high have continuous open cabinets made of Quebrache wood from Brazil. This wood when polished is of a dull terra-cotta red color, and is one of the very hardest obtainable. There is great difficulty in working it; but this has not been taken into consideration in the design, which is crowded to the utmost elaborate detail—cut and carved and molded with infinite variety. Recesses of various sizes are formed, panels of lacquer work being let in the backs. In these recesses are placed rich and rare Japanese and Chinese pottery, mostly vases of beautiful and curious forms, and of rich self colors—turquoise and celadon perhaps prevailing.

The fireplace in recess at end is a wonderful piece of design and a marvel of work. It almost defies description, and it must suffice to say that it would be utterly impossible to elaborate it further than it is at present. Some splendid old Japanese bronzes have been incorporated in the design with excellent effect. At the side is a richly stained-glass window, painted in strong and vigorous colors by LaFarge, and illuminated from behind by the electric light.

Round the room is deep frieze of specially manufactured silk, which was embroidered in Japan. The ceiling is of paneled wood. Richly embroidered silks of beautiful and delicate colors are used as hangings, and in the furniture the Japanese feeling has been carried out; but comfort

has not been sacrificed. Altogether the room is quite unique, and at every turn there is an astonishing amount of variety and interest.

En suite with this gorgeous parlor is the dining room, which has been designed and decorated after the manner of Elizabethan house in England. The room is wainscoted, and in the large open fireplace is an old-fashioned dog grate. The furniture is all in the same style, darkened oak being used throughout, and to insure accuracy of form and detail, the whole of the appointments were sent from England, special care having been taken to follow the old examples in the designs.

Service to the dining-room is from the butler's pantry adjoining it, as is usual in almost all American houses. Here the fittings are of polished mahogany, while all the conveniences for work are of the most complete description. The kitchen, etc., are in the sub basement, and are fit adjuncts to the house, marble being freely used and the walls tiled.

On the first floor and throughout the same lavish profusion reigns. The library and boudoir, though not quite so striking as the apartments already described, are richly decorated and splendidly appointed. The principal sleeping apartments are very elaborate with beautifully finished dressing and bath rooms adjoining. Each of these suits of rooms is finished in a different style, as much care having been exercised in them as in the reception rooms. They are fitted and finished in various kinds of wood, the walls hung in many cases, with old and costly silks, or richly decorated by well-known American artists. On the walls of the rooms and corridor are valuable etchings and engravings, besides many water colors from English exhibitions. The numerous fixed wardrobes or clothes closets are fitted up with cedar wood.



CHINESE BRONZE VASE OR INCENSE-BURNER.